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## Extended essay cover

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: WORLD STUDIES  
(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: UNDERSTANDING MASS MEDIA BIAS  
AND FORMULATING A SOLUTION.

### Candidate's declaration

*This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a grade may not be issued.*

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

### Supervisor's report and declaration

*The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.*

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters)

*Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here*

originally had approached his math teacher to be his supervisor and together they developed a topic for to pursue. He did so through our process and like all the students was assigned to write the full paper over summer and present a rough draft upon return to school. approached his supervisor and told him he had changed his topic. The supervisor said, "OK," assuming that meant he also changed his supervisor. then worked on his paper without contacting anyone until the final draft was due, upon which his original supervisor said he would not be the supervisor. So, over a very brief time period, I have supervised in his EE, although I have no expertise on his topic. I have read the paper and suggested format changes and pointed out the unusual syntax he sometimes uses that clouds his meaning. He has discussed his process with me and I have overseen a viva voce and I am confident through this process, although short, that did write the paper.

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*This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a grade may not be issued.*

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent 

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 hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

## Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Criteria	Achievement level					
	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3	
A research question	<input type="text" value="1"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
B introduction	<input type="text" value="1"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
C investigation	<input type="text" value="2"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
D knowledge and understanding	<input type="text" value="1"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
E reasoned argument	<input type="text" value="1"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
F analysis and evaluation	<input type="text" value="1"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
G use of subject language	<input type="text" value="1"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
H conclusion	<input type="text" value="1"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
I formal presentation	<input type="text" value="2"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
J abstract	<input type="text" value="0"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	
K holistic judgment	<input type="text" value="1"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	
Total out of 36		<input type="text" value="12"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	

# A Study of Mass Media and Finding a Negligible Solution for its Bias

World Studies: Extended Essay

31 October, 2013

Word Count: 3076

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### Abstract

The paper is about media bias and trying to understand how to solve it. This course of action came from viewing the possible effects it could have had on the 2012 United States election. The way that the essay is set up is that I presented all the mainstream theories as to what media's effect on the world is, then move on to explain the different methods of bias such as how certain shows that everyone watches are actually extremely bias comparatively to how news is expected to be "fair and balanced". After this I explain the motives of why mass media enacts these bias statements and then back up the possible effect it could have on society with simple mathematics to show how the 2012 election could have been decided easily if the mass media affected it as much as it did. Alternatively the journalistic theories that are purpose in here all point to removing private control over the news organization of the United States and any other organizations in favor of a program that's non-biased and not controlled by the wealthy elite, which is explained in my conclusion.

Word Count: 190

## *1. Introduction*

The United States of America is a representation democracy which means that its citizens participate in elections that determines whom among them will be the representatives to lead the country. These elections are of global importance because they determine foreign policy and world trade in one of the largest economies in the world. Since the elections are of a significant value in terms of global relevance then so are the deciding factors of these elections which take place in determining the candidates and the policies these candidates support. Within the past decade no single factor has played a bigger part in changing the opinions of voters than the large scale media networks like CNN, FOX, and MSNBC. It is because of this factor that I believe it holds huge significance that each one sways voters by their own biased newscast, from either presenting certain stories or dodging coverage of headline news. Then it is justified to say that media bias is of global relevance to the inhabitants of the planet.

Research Question: How did media bias effect the 2012 United States election and why did it have an effect on the voters who participated in the election?

The research question draws on a precise political event; The 2012 United States of America Presidential election, which is of huge global importance and in turn the world media covered every scandal, circumstance, and story related to determining the next President of the United States for around 5 months without deterring. It was in these five months that the media's large viewer base was swayed to vote one way or another once November came and the final votes were tallied. Depending on the perspective of the media outlet the viewers watch I believe they were more likely to vote a certain distinct way than another due to the way the media outlets took facts and stories and twisted them into its own perspective which holds to it a certain bias

representation of the true factual story. Dubious to say but this is certainly of global significance of due to media bias and because one station has a larger audience then another, a certain candidate wins. More support for why this is an important topic is that a recent study done by PEW research, points out that people do not want news with a political point of few (*In Changing News Landscape, Even Television Is Vulnerable*). (See Appendix chart 1)

### *1.1 Why does this require an interdisciplinary approach?*

The use of mathematics is required to understand the immense statistical data at hand in terms election results and media viewer participation and effect. More specifically to graphically organize it into an unbiased representation of the quantitative data collected. However because mass media doesn't just deal in numbers and many viewers watch more than one station it is also the responsibility of the social sciences such as journalism, economics, and Anthropology to help understand the "fourth state" and its actions to concluded the qualitative portion of the discussion and formulate a rational conclusion.

### *1.2 How the Essay is organized*

First step is to explain the key terms and what mass media is as referred to by the research question. The second step is to explain the different formats in how they are biased presenting several different theories and concepts. The third step is to explain why certain outlets are biased presenting several concepts and theories. The fourth step is to prove that there is an effect on the elections from mass media using 2012 election data along with media viewer counts deciphered imploring statistics to prove objectively that there is an effect. The final steps will be to formulate a solution and critically analyze the subject.

## *2. What is mass media?*



Mass media is communication—whether written, broadcast, or spoken—that reaches a large audience. This includes television, radio, advertising, movies, the Internet, newspapers, magazines, and so forth ("The Role and Influence of mass Media"). There are three different dominant theories as to how mass media affects the world along with their direct contrasting statements for juxtaposition and formulate a workable theory thereafter.

### *2.1 Limited-Effects theory*

The mass media cannot directly change most people's strongly-held attitudes or opinions. This is usually explained in relation to selective perception: viewers tend to select and interpret media messages in accordance with their existing attitudes and beliefs, and their use of the mass media tends to reinforce these (Chandler 2011). Thus whatever someone believes they search for an outlet that reflects the viewer's beliefs. The two chief criticisms of this theory are that the choices are limited by the range of media outlets available (Ali 2013). The next is that the theory explains the reason why we consume particular media products but they don't address the question of whether the media creates or reflects our needs (Ali 2013).

### *2.2 Class-Dominant theory*

The class-dominant theory states that the media reflects and projects the views of minority elite that control it. Those people who own and control the corporations that produce media comprise these elite (Domhoff 2013). It's a very simple and clear idea that because the people whom own the mass media outlets have the right to choose what goes on the air and what doesn't they essentially have complete control of the media and can present any idea in any light that suits the operation of parent companies in order to either keep ads on the station or donor money. The main argument to this theory is that we as the consumer would demand something

that we could watch and enjoy watching so that in order for the elite to have control over our opinions we'd have to let them instead of finding what is now more readily available sources of information on the internet (Heakal 2013).

### *2.3 Culturist theory*

The culturist theory, developed in the 1980s and 1990s, combines the other two theories and claims that people interact with media to create their own meanings out of the images and messages they receive. This theory sees audiences as playing an active rather than passive role in relation to mass media. One strand of research focuses on the audiences and how they interact with media; the other strand of research focuses on those who produce the media, particularly the news (Dean 2010).

### *2.4 Bringing the Theories together*

With the limited-effect theory it left little room for the media effect the outcome of an election which would make it extremely hard to believe given that historically the fourth estate has caused many campaigns to go down in smoke which contrast deeply with the standards of the theory, however the Class-dominant theory also has a dubious error in that because the view has a free will and the ability to exercise this will the elite technically do not have the ability to hoax citizens into a biased perspective. The final Theory as to how media works combines the two previous to form a conclusive inclusive theory that allows for people to choose what they want to see and to choose and for the politically elite to have agendas that they try to push for under the guise of by-partisanship. For the inclusive purposes of how mass media works and what can be proven The Culturist Theory is the mass media type that allows for the research question to have its maximum effect because then the numbers quantitatively must show an

identical match for expected viewers of a the certain party and the way they voted in the 2012 election. If it's off then one can foresee that there is a bias that is changing the opinions of the people.

### *3. In what ways is the mass media coverage bias?*

Below are the three key components to media bias in how they do it.

#### *3.1 gate keeping bias:*

The news outlet decides whether they should break the news story or discarding what some might find important and what others may find treacherous (Rivolta 2011).

#### *3.2 coverage bias:*

By covering one topic for longer periods of time then other news outlets a bias starts to form because people are inadvertently learning about a subject in more specific detail then they would another subject and or not be given the ability to hear the next subject (Rivolta 2011).

#### *3.3 statement bias:*

When the news anchor mediates and interrupts debates and reflects on facts s/he is endorsing in statement bias which unfortunately eliminates the credibility of any "round table debate".

Another very common form of this is the fallacy of special pleading, which is often used for patriotically sensitive events (Rivolta 2011).

#### *3.4 Adjoining the Bias together*

When you take each one separately no one perceives and exact amount of politically slanted rhetoric however when all together a clear picture starts to form on the amount of premeditative

action that goes into creating a news broadcast that's perspective slants viewers in one way or another. These concepts will come in to play when doing the qualitative calculations.

#### *4. Why is media biased? And why does it matter in an election?*

Essentially the media is biased because they want you to watch their programing. They need to provide a product to their consumers who are the advertising agencies and as such they need as many people as possible to watch their channel when those ads come up. It is because of private news stations that there is no true answer and factual reports and even then factual reports can be biased if they leave out any information i.e gate-keeping concept, however here are nine concepts of bias within the journalism that are all applicable to election coverage however the three that play the largest affect are Visual bias, Bad news bias, and Fairness bias;

##### *4.1 Visual bias*

“Television is biased toward visual depictions of news. Television is nothing without pictures. Legitimate news that has no visual angle is likely to get little attention. Much of what is important in politics--policy--cannot be photographed” (Cline 2013).

##### *4.2 Bad news bias*

“Good news is boring (and probably does not photograph well, either). This bias makes the world look like a more dangerous place than it really is. Plus, this bias makes politicians look far more crooked than they really are” (Cline 2013).

##### *4.3 Fairness bias*

“No, this is not an oxymoron. Ethical journalistic practice demands that reporters and editors be fair. In the news product this bias manifests as a contention between/among

political actors. Whenever one faction or politician does something or says something newsworthy, the press is compelled by this bias to get a reaction from an opposing camp. This creates the illusion that the game of politics is always contentious and never cooperative. This bias can also create situations in which one faction appears to be attacked by the press. For example, politician A announces some positive accomplishment followed by the press seeking a negative comment from politician B. The point is not to disparage politician A but to be fair to politician B. When politician A is a conservative, this practice appears to be liberal bias” (Cline 2013).

#### *4.4 Reflecting on why their bias*

I need to know the main bias that plays the largest role in the election to determine how one can safely calculate if there is an extreme media bias within the news coverage of the United States of America Mass Media. This is the limitation of mathematics that when you create categorical data without supporting information you could be accidentally counting data twice or wrongly supported data as true and objective. For this reason I needed to know about journalism, and subsequently social sciences to understand how people will perceive the perspectives of the newscast that brings them their news.

#### *5. Statistics of the 2012 U.S Election*

The first approach is to acknowledge an overall picture organized by PEW research in the graphical representation in the appendix that shows a majority of news organizations are Democratic giving the original perspective that the republican party must be getting targeted by these news organizations and mass media while also being supported by the Romney campaign in 2012 ("Romney Campaign Gets More Coverage Across Media Space |Election 2012."). If

overall the majority our democratic then they should reflect President Obama in a positive a light given their certain bias or they may avoid presenting him like the gate keeper concept suggest and also like the bad news bias suggest that whenever something bad happens for President Obama the coverage shifts right away back to Romney. (see Appendix chart 3) So thus it's fair to understand that there is an apparent bias when a poll presented from 4<sup>th</sup> Estates clarifies that it does happen: (see Appendix chart 2) Falling back on the concept of what bias is and how it happens; FOX, CNN, and MSNBC all have fairness policies which means that anything that one does they ask the other thus we can safely assume that only the difference in coverage can be counted therefore; Romney Campaign coverage-Obama Campaign coverage = Difference in Coverage  $12\%-10\%=2\%$  (taken from chart 3 see appendix) Thus if the difference in mass media coverage compare with 90 million possible viewers of FOX news / 313.9 million citizens of the United States roughly reaching arriving at to 28.671% of the population then we know that there are 22 % independent persons who watch FOX. Furthermore  $.28671 * .22 = .06307 = 6\%$  of the American People who are independents watch Fox news. Taking into account that voter turnout is around 40% for the 2012 election where there were 129 million voters, to ensure an even distribution  $129 / 313.9 = 41.09\%$  of people who voted, and then  $41.09\% * 6\% = 2.4\%$  of are Independents whom are presumed to have voted that watch Fox news in the United States. President Barack Obama won the popular election by less than 5 million votes. If negative coverage is what was to play in Mitt Romney's campaign then  $2.4\% * 313.9 \text{ million} = 7.5$  million people. Thus if the campaign was perceived negative by these people, and were voting democrat, Mitt Romney just lost the popular vote because of Mass Media.

### *5.1 Limitations*

The problem with truly knowing the amount of difference that Mass Media plays is that people take many things into consideration when they vote, and as such Mass Media could be just a background noise in the eyes of the voter or it could be the thriving example for what to do but because we can't look into the minds of the people there are no definitive answers to be won here. What can be said with absolute certainty is that Mass Media plays a large role in politics reinforced by the label the 4<sup>th</sup> state given to it by the rest of the executive, legislative and judicial correspondents. Another note is that most of the statistics gathered is from polling and survey taking to gather as much information as possible about the elections and the thoughts of the people, which is perfect except again they used random sampling which has the effect of giving biased answers from time to time.

### *6. Reasoned Argument*

Media bias effects are of global significance, because it affects things that are of global significance such as elections and more specifically the 2012 election. It is a problem because it unfairly sways viewers to be more willing to vote for one side then another. The mathematics in the paper clearly show that within one news organizations viewers of only around 6% you could change an election for one side a clear statement that because only 120 million people voted and 90 million have Fox news it is essentially a huge problem at the end of the day for what could influence an election. This is a comparative advantage on the other party and also comes off as campaigning on what should be a nationally accepted source of valid truthful and factual information that contains no bias representation of the truth. To fix a problem you need to

understand it so in order to understand it I listed all the ways it happens and then defined why it happened in order to derive a solution from the biases that it is a problem that needs to be solved. Most of the Media bias as it turns out stems from advertisements and cooperate interest that effectively cripple the station in the search and entire goal of only wanting more viewers instead of actual credible sources of information.

## *7. Conclusion*

Overall I believe that media bias has the potential to critically ruin the democratic system giving the illusion of freedom, freewill, and an unvested interest, but secretly pushing agendas that would speak otherwise. This is why I believe best that if the United States and if any countries in the world want fair news they would have to make it a public organization controlled by the state but in no way managed by it. Alternatively to that they are not to have any advertisements, or corporate sponsorships. This single handedly takes care for why media is biased as explained in section 4. In ways that take care of how they are biased in actual operation, the solution would be that the days of the newsroom are over, instead one might have a permanent stream of information brought about by automatics electronic dumps that would send the information in the format of what's important, how long ago did it happen, and what should I know. With these guidelines the Gatekeeping bias would be held in check and never encroached upon. Alternatively it would also handle coverage bias because everything would get an equal amount of time to present and make its story known. The last step to confronting bias would be statement bias which would never truly be gone because even in writing its presented in a certain perspective that can't be avoided, however I believe that if you tackle the rest of the reasons for being bias and the ways of doing it that the media as a whole would much more likely follow the limited-effect theory instead of the current class-dominant creation. The



culturalist theory would be nullified by association because opinions wouldn't make it into the news only the facts would which means that we as a society influences itself there would be to focal point to express it within a news station oriented environment.

## Appendix

Chart 1 - ("In Changing News Landscape, Even Television Is Vulnerable.")

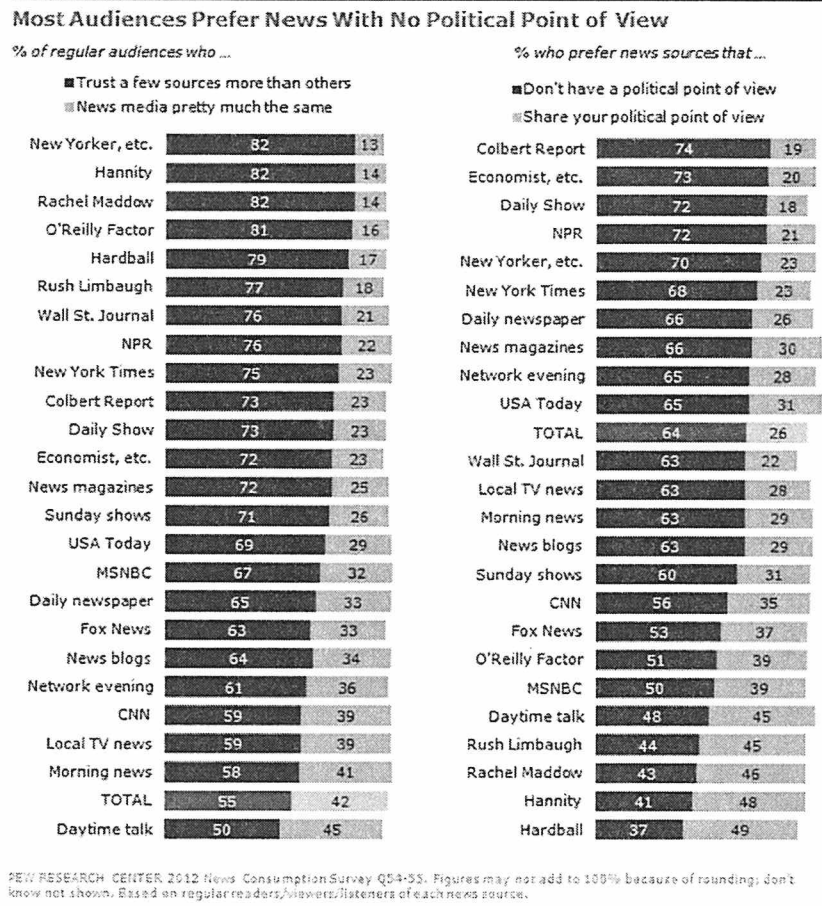


Chart 2 - ("Romney Campaign Gets More Coverage Across Media Space | Election 2012 Election 2012.")

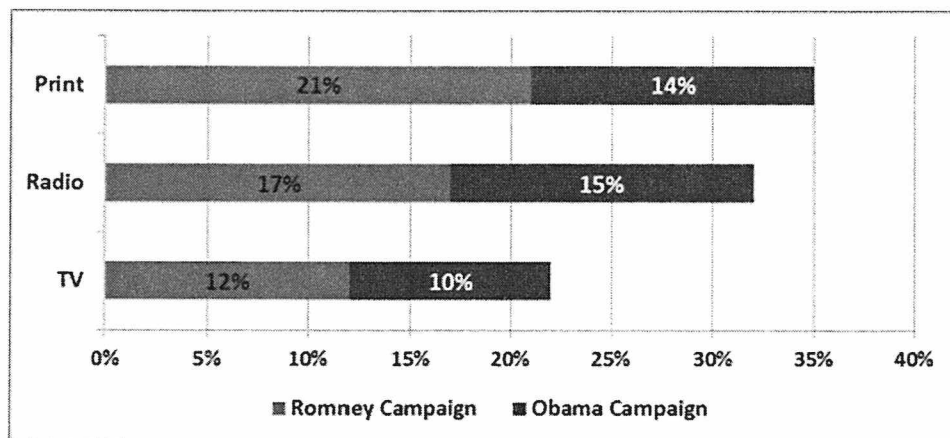
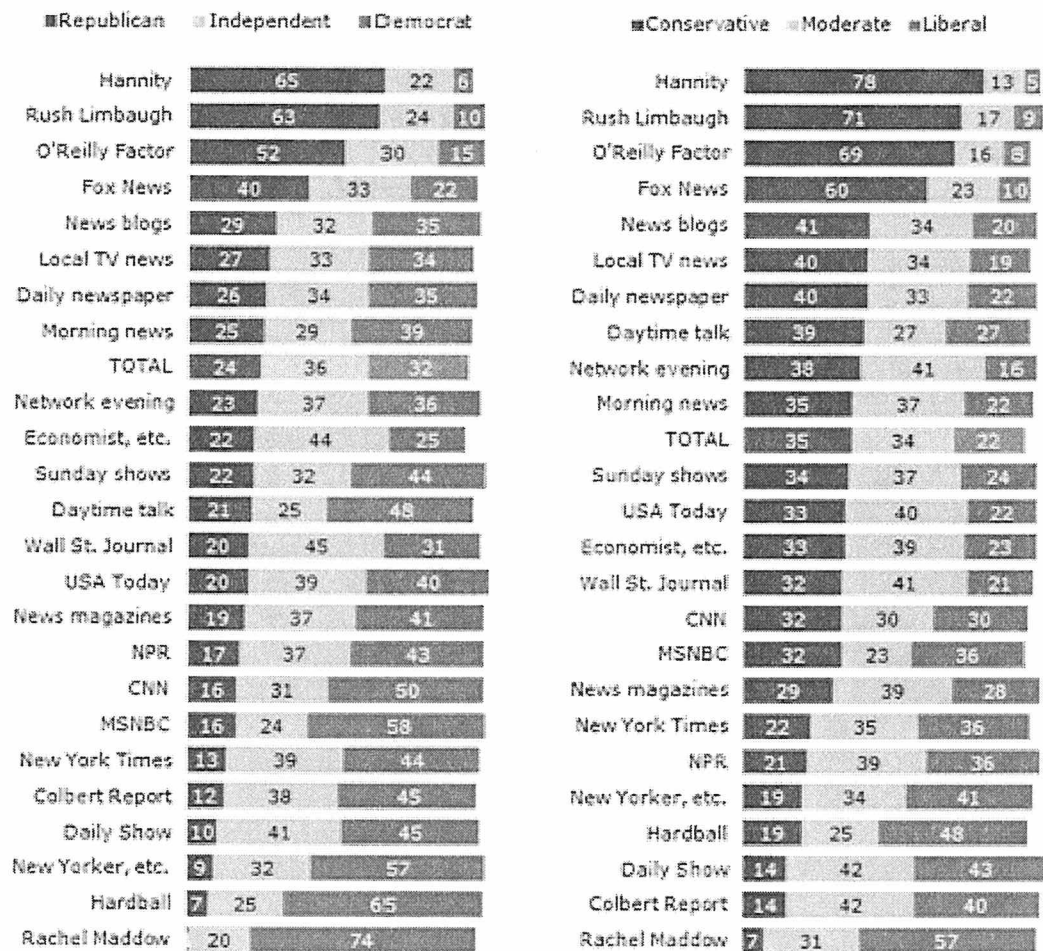


Chart 3- ("In Changing News Landscape, Even Television Is Vulnerable.")

## Partisanship and Ideology of News Audiences



PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2012 News Consumption Survey. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding; don't know not shown. Based on regular readers/viewers/listeners of each news source.

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